

Producing Public Education Materials:

Policy and Procedures

Rationale

Public Health education materials play an important role in public education interventions and dissemination of health information. When strategically planned and executed, these materials not only inform and educate targeted groups and individuals, but also promote and facilitate desired change in attitude, belief, and behavior. In addition, these materials help “brand” Public Health, increasing the public’s appreciation and trust of our expertise, role, and work.

To this end, we have created the following policy and procedures to ensure quality and institute accountability in the production of public educational materials by Public Health employees.

Policy

Public Health employees are expected to follow the procedures as outlined in this policy, *Producing Public Education Materials*, when creating or revising brochures, posters, videos, booklets/pamphlets, newsletters, bus signs, billboards, print advertisements, and small media (e.g., stickers, magnets). This policy may also apply to other kinds of materials or media. Flyers are exempt from this policy. (When creating flyers, use one of the standard Public Health [templates for flyer creation](#).)

The Communications Manager, Regional Health Educators, and program designees shall provide technical assistance/guidance for staff creating or revising materials and shall assure that designated procedures are followed.

The supervisor or manager responsible for the related programs shall review and approve materials for general content and message accuracy. Public Health’s Medical Director or one of the Disease Control Officers shall review and approve materials for accuracy of medical content, as necessary.

Procedures

Regardless of the type of public education materials that you intend to create, the following procedures will assist you in producing highly effective and appealing materials that reach your target audience(s), and promote and facilitate desirable health behaviors, beliefs, and/or attitudes.

When developing and producing public education materials, use the following procedures:

1. Define the basics

Ask yourself three key questions:

- 1) Who is the target audience for the materials being developed?
- 2) What do you want the audience to do?
- 3) How will your education materials accomplish this objective?

2. Plan your strategy

Take a few moments at the beginning of your project to put strategy to paper. Doing this first will save you time and effort in producing your materials.

Check With HEM Project before You Start

Before you begin actual composition and design of your materials, contact Elizabeth Comstock at the Health Education Materials (HEM) Program. The HEM Program library may already contain or have access to materials that suit your needs.

Fill In Your Creative Strategy Worksheet

The Creative Strategy Worksheet (CSW) has been created specifically to make your strategic planning as simple and straightforward as possible. For an example of what a Creative Strategy Worksheet might look like, see the Sample Creative Strategy Worksheet.

The CSW serves as a blueprint for your creative efforts, helping you to focus on your target audience and anticipate problems before they occur. In addition, the

CSW will enable you to share your strategy with colleagues and supervisors for the purpose of getting useful feedback.

Complete Your Strategy Work

In addition to completing the CSW, consider and carry out the following items:

- 1) **Budget:** Establish a budget for your project. See the Sample Budget for an example of a simple and straightforward approach.
- 2) **Timeline:** Establish when you need the materials. Set up a timeline for completing each stage of your work.
- 3) **Creative Involvement:** Decide whom you need to include in the process of creating the materials (e.g., advisory group, colleagues, the Director of Public Health, local business owners). Determine what role you want each person to take (e.g., advocacy, advice, feedback, approval).
- 4) **Audience Research:** If you need more information about your target audience, consider doing a literature search through Medline, and/or conduct focus groups, surveys, or interviews of the population and service providers. (See Formative Evaluation Methods.)
- 5) **Behavior Change Theory:** To understand more about how and why people change their health behaviors, see the leading behavioral change models at the Health Education Resource Exchange (HERE) at <http://www.hereinwa.org/howto/images/Behavior.html>.

Seek Approval for CSW before Design and Creative Work Begin

When your CSW is complete, obtain review and approval from the Communications Manager or designee. Depending on the nature of the project, some additional refinement and review of your CSW may be required.

3. Create

Make an initial draft of your copy and design:

- 1) Who will write copy? Will you do it yourself or seek assistance from colleagues or other professionals?
- 2) What is your audience's reading level? (See Writing for Interest and Understanding.)
- 3) Does your text need to be translated into one or more languages? (See Translating Print Materials.) To ensure that your materials are culturally

appropriate, as well as retain their meaning and message in translation, test the translated materials with target populations. (See Preview section of this document for information on testing.)

- 4) Will you create graphics and layout yourself, or will you use a graphic artist? Do you want to recruit a graphic designer or advertising professional to work with you on a pro-bono or reduced-fee basis? (See Recruiting and Working with Pro-Bono Talent.) If you choose to hire a graphic artist, please contact the Communications Manager to get information about graphic designers already on contract with Public Health.
- 5) How can the design be made appealing to the eye? Do your graphics meet ADA guidelines? (See Basic Guidelines for the Design of Print Materials.)
- 6) If your materials are printed, who will do the printing? How many estimates will you get? Will you use the King County print shop, or will you get bids from outside printers? Please contact the Communications Manager for more information on printing options.

4. Preview

Try your materials out with the target audience and others (see Pre-testing and Revising the Materials):

- 1) Who do you want giving input? (e.g., target audience members, your supervisor, community service providers, clients, public health staff, business owners where materials may be distributed).
- 2) What do you want to know (e.g., what messages do they get from the materials? are the messages consistent with community standards?)? How much input do you want?
- 3) How will you gather this information? Will you conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews?

5. Refine

Use feedback to make the material more effective (see Pre-testing and Revising the Materials):

- 1) How appealing was the material to the target group? Did they want to pick it up or look at it?

- 2) How well did the target group understand and extract your intended message?
- 3) How likely would target group members be to act on the material's message?
- 4) Did the target group take offense at messages or language in the material?
Was the material appropriate for the community? Did the material offend non-target groups?

6. Preview and Refine a second time

Repeat steps 4 and 5.

7. Disseminate

Get the materials to your target audience:

- 1) Alert Elizabeth Comstock about your new or revised materials so that she may list them with the HEM Program library, giving other agencies access to what you have produced.
- 2) Where will the materials be displayed and/or distributed? Who will be responsible for execution and oversight of this effort?
- 3) If the service providers distribute and/or display the materials, how will they ensure that the materials reach the target audience? How will you let service providers know where they can order more materials?

8. Evaluate

Determine if your goals are being met (see Measuring Your Success):

- 1) How will you evaluate your success? Will you use a simple measurement (e.g., counting widgets), or something more complex (e.g., randomized interviewing with behavioral assessment)? Or will you use some other mid-level strategy?
- 2) What feedback are you getting from your clients? From service providers?
- 3) Can you change the materials based on ongoing feedback? If you need to revise or reprint your materials, who will be keeping the originals and/or electronic files?
- 4) What have you learned to guide your, and others', future efforts?

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

about the Policy and Procedures:

Q: I do not have the time to go through a long, complicated process to produce public education materials. Are the Policy and Procedures really necessary?

A: The Policy and Procedures for *Producing Public Education Materials* are important because they require you to think strategically about the health education materials that you are planning to produce. Far from adding complications, the Policy and Procedures will help you simplify and focus your work, and clarify what you need to accomplish to reach your goal. Ultimately, this will save you time and money, and lead you toward producing health education materials that are effective and reach your clients.

Q: Are flyers included under this policy?

A: Flyers are not formally included under the Policy and Procedures for *Producing Public Education Materials*; however, using this process, even in an abbreviated form, will serve to maximize the effectiveness of your flyer materials. When creating flyers, use one of the standard Public Health [templates for flyer creation](#).

Q: What is a flyer template, and why do I need to use it?

A: The Public Health flyer template is your starting point for production of flyers. All of the templates include the Public Health logo, title, and address in formats that are easy to read and recognize. The purpose of the template is to create a standard, high-quality graphic identity for Public Health that will clearly distinguish the source of your information from competing materials. The consistent format will help you by eliminating the need to re-create the Public Health identification elements every time you create a flyer; it will help your clients by getting useful information to them in an easily recognizable format.

Q: I already know what will work for my clients. Why do I need to use the Policy and Procedures for Producing Public Education Materials?

A: Without testing whether or not your assumptions are true, you don't know if your materials are effective or not. Additionally, you may be favoring materials based on your own preferences or biased assumptions, rather than the preferences or needs of your target audience.

Q: I need help with my project. Who can I contact?

A: Public Health's Communications Team, Regional Health Educators, and program designees can provide guidance for you in producing health education materials. Please contact one of the following:

- Mark Alstead at 205-1143 or mark.alstead@metrokc.gov
- Caren Adams at 205-1706 or caren.adams@metrokc.gov
- June Belefond at 296-4755 or june.belefond@metrokc.gov
- Elaine Cummins at 296-9756 or elaine.cummins@metrokc.gov

Q: Basing our public education materials on principles of behavioral science make sense, but I'm not familiar with the current research. Where can I get more information on models of health behavior?

A: A good description of the leading theories of behavioral change can be found on the Health Education Resource Exchange (HERE) at <http://www.hereinwa.org/howto/images/Behavior.html>

Q: Are there other resources available that I may use in developing my public education materials?

A: Within Public Health, the HEM Program can provide resources for materials development and evaluation. Contact Elizabeth Comstock (296-4354 or

elizabeth.comstock@metrokc.gov) for more information. Additionally, the HIV/AIDS Program has a Health Educators' Toolbox section on their website that provides useful support materials for all health educators.

Outside Public Health, the Health Education Resource Exchange (HERE) website (<http://www.hereinwa.org/index.html>) provides information for production of health educational materials.

Q: My program does not have much money to spend. How do I estimate costs?

A: Costs for materials generally include three expenses: design, production or printing, and placement. Sometimes there are also planning costs such as small stipends for focus group participants.

Design: You can often do design work on software such as Word or MS Publisher. Alternatively, a graphic artist - either paid or pro-bono - can be used.

Production or Printing: Materials production costs can vary widely, depending largely on the nature of the product. For printed materials, you can make a black-and-white master and have it photocopied as a low-cost option. In some instances, especially when colored ink or graphics are used, using a professional printer makes better sense, although it will cost more. Please call the Communications Manager for more information on your printing options.

Placement: For mass media, such as bus signs or newspapers, advertising space can be a significant additional expense. In the case of newspapers, you can keep costs down by pricing rates in a number of papers, and choosing those that are most efficient at reaching the greatest number of people in your target audience.

Q: I have target audiences that include non-English speaking populations. Where can I get public educational materials translated into other languages?

A: For translating relatively short (one page or less) documents, complete a request for translation form ([download the form here](#)) and e-mail with the document to be translated

to Michael Lee at Translation Services. His e-mail address is michael.lee@metrokc.gov; if you do not have e-mail access, you may fax the request to him at (206) 296-0184.

If your document extends beyond one page, or if Translation Services cannot otherwise translate your document, their office can recommend outside agencies with which you may choose to work. For more information on translation issues, see [Translating Print Materials](#).

Following translation, test the document with target audiences to ensure that it is culturally appropriate as well as verify that the original meaning and message is retained. For more information on testing materials, see [Pre-testing and Revising the Materials](#).